

AMENDED CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions in the application.

CLAIMS: I claim:

1. A combination protective bumper and placemat, wherein the improvement comprises:
 - a. utilizing prior art plastic toy links or another tethering system and,
 - b. loops affixed to the placemat, providing means to restrain accessories from falls and loss by removably connecting the prior art accessory's ring through the opening of the placemat's ring so that they must be deliberately and forcefully pried from the hold of each other to detach from one another,
 - c. reducibility in size, specifically depth, for ease of transport by rolling from an extended position featuring a square mat portion on which to dine, to a tubular, coiled position with the compression system retracted to minimize length, reducing in size, while remaining one singular unit at all times.
2. A method for attaching the combination protective bumper, placemat, and accessory restraint system to an exposed edge of a table, wherein the improvement comprises:
 - a. utilizing a means of frictional materials and a variable-depth, compression-type gripping system, able to be removably and reusably attached to an object, such as a table.
3. An integrated protective bumper permanently attached by having been sandwiched between the invention's washable material top and the frictional material backing, permanently affixed to the c-shaped base through the mechanical fastening of materials together.

REFUTATION OF REFERENCES CITED

Examiner has identified references listed as A-L on the Notice of References Cited.

Patent number US-4,716,840 was specifically cited as a basis for rejection, and is refuted first. Refutation of all other references cited will follow in alphabetical order, as listed by Examiner Chen.

H. Documents Number US-4,716,840

Drafting Board with Replaceable Surface Layer

Tringali et al

Tringali et al teaches the design of a non-flexible board, not intended for attachment to another table structure, as does application 10/672,341. Tringali et al teaches a pencil trough at one edge and a “perimetric retaining rim” at the remaining 3 edges, with no discussion of need or existence of a protective, parallel bumper; which if leaned against with drafting paper between the invention and user, would likely create the undesirable effect of wrinkling the drafting paper.

Also, the “retaining rim” on the prior art would have no purpose in evolving into a pair of loops to which items might be attached, as the intention of the rim and trough are to retain writing instruments, which are narrow and cylindrical, and typically do not have points to which they could be tethered. The requirement for a smooth work surface would also prevent the incorporation of any projections from the surface, such as the restraining loops taught in my application 10/672,341.

As a drafting surface, the rigidity and smoothness of the surface would be an undeniable requirement, eliminating the incorporation of rolling the item for portability or reduction of size into the design.

In summary, the use and industry for which Tringali et al have designed and intended this prior art precludes the addition of such features that make application 10/672,341 unique, specifically, the restraining system comprised of loops, padded bumper and roll-up ability to make the item reducible in surface area size.

REFUTATION OF FURTHER REFERENCES CITED

Below is a reference-by-reference refutation of the remaining references cited (listed A –L, except H) on the Notice Of References Cited of the Office Action.

A. Document Number US-771,009

Cover Attachment for Tables or Counters

Guardia

The prior art is intended for permanent affixation on a structure and use in storing items under or covering articles displayed on counter or tabletops. Oppositely, my application for patent 10/672,341 is intended for temporary affixation to tabletops and other dining surfaces, for use to dine upon, not cover articles beneath. Prior art does not teach the restraint of any article by deliberately connecting items to it, nor does it imply any protective bumpers.

B. Document Number US-796,855

Table

Nurick

The prior art is intended to be of a dimension larger than an ordinary table, made to extend the useful area beyond the perimeter of a table to which it is affixed. Nurick makes no mention of ability to reduce the invention in size to permit ease of transport, no inference to its use for the soft protection of table edges, or the restraint of items from falling, as does my application for patent 10/672,341.

C. Document Number US-826,669

Table-Top

Kindgen

The prior art teaches the conversion of square table tops to round. The proposed use of the prior art is for changing the shape of a table, with no mention of padded bumpers, attachment points for accessories, portability features or frictional surfaces aiding in the invention's attachment to other objects.

D. Document Number US-1,184,968

Dining-Table-Cloth Appliance

Krause

The prior art is designed and states that it is intended for use as a roller to dispense clean linen from a spool, on which to dine. No mention is made of protective bumpers, methods of temporarily or fictionally affixing the clean dining surface to the table structure. Portability is not an intended feature, nor is the affixation of items in order to keep them from falling onto floor surfaces.

E. Document Number US-3,173,677

Drafting-Sheet Clamp

Guyot

The prior art is designed and states that it is intended for use to keep papers hanging over the edge of a square-edged table from creasing or marring with use of an elongated, rounded edge. There are not features present that would lead a person skilled in the art to extrapolate from this invention in the field of drafting to the field of child care and the conversion of the rounded edge to a padded bumper. The prior art would not be a suitable substitution for the invention proposed in my application 10/672,341.

F. Document Number US-4,088,081

Card Tray

D'Arca

The prior art is designed as an extension of a table; no bumper, no system to attach items, nor any mention or intention of portraying the system as collapsible is indicated.

G. Document Number US-4,708,183

Combination Table Cover and Skirt Retainer

Figueroa

The invention serves as a tablecover with a detachable skirt. The lack of a restraint system and a bumper edge, and the primary intended use as a tablecloth are substantial differences between the prior art and proposed application 10/672,341. Based upon the intended use of the prior art, incorporation of the features differing, found in

application 10/672,341's description of a preferred embodiment claims, would not be an obvious alternation or improvement.

H. Document Number US-4,716,840

Drafting Board with Replaceable Surface Layer

Tringali et al

Refer to refutation detail as explained under title "Refutation of References Cited", page 3.

I. Document Number US-4,958,577

Roll-Up Lap Tray

Demaio et al

Demaio et al teach a roll-up tray, but lack components such as a means to removably attach to tables, restrain items from falling or pad sharp table edges with any type of bumper. Without specific direction toward these functions, these additional features would not be obvious additions to the prior art.

J. Document Number US-5,508,084

Repositionable Articles Having a Microstructured

Surface, Kits for Producing Same, and Methods of Use

Reeves et al

Reeves et al teach a frictional surfaced mat for use in an office setting, for specific use as a mouse pad. No mention of protective bumpers, mechanical attachment to a table, or method of restraining items is described. Addition of such features would be outside the purpose of the art and unnecessary, and therefore, unlikely.

K. Document Number US-5,779,318

Combination Hearth Seat and Child Protector

O'Reilly

O'Reilly teaches a foam, fire retardant-fabric covered bumper for use on a fireplace hearth. No mention of a clamping device for attachment is described, nor the ability to reduce in size for portability or any features of an object restraint system. The clamping device would not be a feasible addition to the art based upon the structure to which it is intended to be attached. The restraint of toys to the item would be unlikely based upon the proximity to a fire hazard, such as an operating fireplace. The intended function of the prior art would make incorporation of such missing features unlikely and unnecessary.

L. Document Number US-5,908,681

Protective Table Covers

Foster

Foster teaches a covering for the complete surface of a table with protective edge channel. A rigid channel at the perimeter restricts the reducibility of the item for portability purposes, and lacks any toy restraint system or adjustability for varying depths of tables.